



External Assessment Report 2012

Subject(s)	HISTORY
Level(s)	INTERMEDIATE 1

The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the examination.

Comments on candidate performance

General comments

The majority of candidates appeared to be entered at the correct level. There were relatively few very able candidates. There were some centres that presented very weak candidates.

Markers noted that the standard of candidates had improved in some aspects. They also commented that copying of sources was much reduced compared to previous years, and it is good to see centres taking note of the advice regarding this.

Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates did well in selecting information from sources. Most candidates now introduce their answers well by using the question as a stem. They are also becoming more adept at recognising — and avoiding — distracters.

There was evidence of some improvement in the ‘how useful is the source’ questions, with candidates often gaining marks for origin and content as well as some providing information regarding authorship. Few, however, attempt purpose or content omission.

Areas which candidates found demanding

In the ‘how useful’ question, few candidates attempt to comment on purpose or content omission. Secondary sources are often evaluated poorly, with candidates assuming a secondary source is not useful.

There is a marked absence of recalled evidence used in answers. Candidates rely heavily on the sources provided.

Candidates had difficulty with Question 1 in the Free at Last context, where many struggled with the source though some compensated with good recall. In Question 4 the Black Panthers was clearly a topic they knew little about.

In Immigrants and Exiles context Question 3, the reference to the Highland and Islands was often ignored by candidates.

Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

While there has been improvement in these areas the following information remains useful to centres as in recent years. Centres should give attention to the following:

1. 'How useful' questions:

In 'how useful' questions, candidates do not gain marks for simply copying the rubric or question. They must also show evaluation:

- ◆ Identify author and explain why he or she is good or weak as a source.
- ◆ Identify as primary from the time or as a secondary source written much later.
- ◆ For content, they only need to identify one major point; they do not have to rehearse the entire source.
- ◆ Comment on the possible purpose of the source.
- ◆ Identify a relevant piece of information which is not included in the source and therefore limits its value.

2. Copying

Centres are reminded that copying of an entire source, complete with distracters, gains 0 marks.

Where the source is copied even without the distracters (even if the order of sentences is transposed — 'shuffled copying'), or where additional phrases such as 'the source says', 'the source also says' have been included, the maximum mark for information from the source is one mark.

While it is preferable that candidates show understanding by putting the points in their own words, it is recognised that many candidates find this difficult. It is therefore acceptable that candidates quote direct phrases from the source — but not entire sentences.

Statistical information: update on Courses

Intermediate 1

Number of resulted entries in 2011	1869
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Number of resulted entries in 2012	2022
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Statistical information: Performance of candidates

Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark 45				
A	16.6%	16.6%	336	31
B	35.0%	51.6%	707	25
C	23.3%	74.9%	471	20
D	9.0%	83.9%	182	17
No award	16.1%	100.0%	326	-

General commentary on grade boundaries

- ◆ While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- ◆ Each year SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- ◆ Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- ◆ An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions, are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in, say, Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.
- ◆ SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.